

Early Literacy: Building the Foundation for Lifelong Learning

K-STATE
Research and Extension
Family and Consumer Sciences

Leader's Guide

2026 Annual Lesson Series



Introduction

Early literacy lays the foundation for a child's lifelong learning, success in school, and social-emotional development. The fact sheet, *Early Literacy: Building the Foundation for Lifelong Learning*, provides research-based information on critical early literacy skills, and age-appropriate developmental milestones from birth to age 5.

By understanding these milestones and implementing practical literacy-building strategies, families, educators, and caregivers can play an active role in nurturing young children's language, cognitive, and social growth. This resource also highlights red flags for potential delays and connects readers to valuable tools and community resources to support early literacy efforts.

This leader's guide is designed to help you facilitate conversations, activities, or workshops using the fact sheet as a foundation. It includes key

teaching points, discussion prompts, and suggestions for engaging families and community partners in fostering early literacy.

Lesson Objectives

Understand the Importance of Early Literacy

Recognize how early literacy supports cognitive, emotional, and social development during the first five years of life.

Identify Developmental Milestones

Learn age-specific milestones for early literacy from birth to age 5, including speech, language, and pre-reading skills.

Promote Effective Literacy Practices

Discover evidence-based strategies for fostering early literacy, such as reading aloud, engaging in conversation, and creating a print-rich environment.

Recognize Signs of Developmental Delays

Gain awareness of potential red flags in literacy and language development and know when to seek professional support.

Empower Families and Caregivers

Equip caregivers with practical tools and resources to support children's literacy and developmental milestones at home.

Encourage Access to Community Resources

Provide information about local and national programs that support early literacy and developmental screenings.

Primary Audiences

Parents and Caregivers

- New parents or expecting families learning about child development.
- Grandparents or extended family members who are involved in caregiving

Early Childhood Educators and Childcare Providers

- Preschool and childcare teachers who play a role in promoting literacy and monitoring developmental progress.

Family Support Professionals

- Home visitors, social workers, and family resource specialists who work with families on parenting and education.

What Leaders Need to Prepare for the Lesson

- Time to read over the leader's guide.
- Fact sheets for participants (MF3691).
- Brochures to further promote the program.
- Evaluation for each participant.

Sample Discussion Prompts

Understanding Early Literacy

- Why do you think early literacy is important for a child's future success?
- What are some ways you already incorporate reading, singing, or storytelling into a child's daily routine?

Developmental Milestones

- What are some milestones you've noticed in children at different ages?
- How can you tell if a child might need additional support with language or literacy development?

Practical Strategies

- What are simple, everyday activities that can promote literacy at home?
- How might you encourage children who seem less interested in books or reading?

Community Resources

- Are you aware of local resources (e.g., libraries, literacy programs) that support early literacy?
- How can you help connect families to these resources?

Activity Ideas for Parents and Caregivers

"15 Minutes a Day" Commitment

Objective: Emphasize the importance of daily reading.

Activity: Provide parents with a simple calendar where they can track 15 minutes of reading, storytelling, or singing each day for a week. Offer stickers or fun markers for tracking and encourage them to reflect on the experience.

Everyday Literacy Scavenger Hunt

Objective: Highlight how literacy opportunities exist in daily routines.

Activity: Ask parents to identify literacy moments in everyday activities (e.g., reading recipes while cooking, looking at street signs, singing lullabies). Have them share their findings in a group or small discussion.

Making Personalized Books

Objective: Help parents create a meaningful literacy tool for their child.

Activity: Provide materials for parents to make a simple book featuring family members, pets, or their child's favorite activities. Encourage parents to read their custom books to their child daily.

Library Connections

Objective: Introduce parents to local resources.

Activity: Provide a short guide to local libraries and their programs (e.g., story times, summer reading challenges). Consider hosting a group visit to the library.

References and Resources

American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, https://pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/2015_AJSLP-14-0105

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, <https://www.asha.org/public/developmental-milestones/communication-milestones/?srsltid=AfmBOop7ui8xCffxUbjlgSfbqoolD0-nuj9OOEGoUFP4pKY3QuJztv1Q>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Developmental milestones by age, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

Family Guided Routines Based Intervention, <https://fgrbi.com/everyday-routines-activities-and-places/>

healthychildren.org, <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/oral-health/Pages/Brush-Book-Bed.aspx>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Developmental-Milestones-of-Early-Literacy.aspx>

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) – Best practices in early literacy and child development, <https://www.naeyc.org>

Parents as Teachers, <https://parentsasteachers.org/>

Zero to Three, Early brain development and literacy resources <https://www.zerotothree.org>

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Early Literacy: Building the Foundation for Lifelong Learning

Please take a moment to respond to the questions below.

Date and location of presentation: _____

My county of residence: _____

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Non-binary ☐ Prefer not to answer

Race: ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native ☐ Asian ☐ Black or African American
☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ☐ White ☐ Prefer not to respond

Ethnicity: ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Non Hispanic/Latino ☐ Prefer not to respond

Age: ☐ 18-29 years ☐ 30-59 years ☐ 60-75 years
☐ 76+ years ☐ Prefer not to answer

1. After this program, I better understand important milestones in a child's literacy development.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. After this program, I better understand how literacy supports a child's overall development.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. After this program, I can know at least one indicator that my child may benefit from professional support.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. After participating in this program, I intend to support my child's literacy by reading with them several times a week.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. After participating in this program, I know of at least two resources I can access to support my child's literacy.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5